

**ZUNI BLUEHEAD SUCKER**  
**(*Catostomus discobolus yarrowi*)**

**STATUS:** Candidate (66 FR 54808, October 30, 2001).

**SPECIES DESCRIPTION:** Coloration varies with habitat conditions, silvery tan to dark green above, silvery to yellowish or dirty-white below. Head often with a bluish cast, especially in large adults. The population of the Little Colorado River is markedly different than those in the Zuni River, with thickened body shapes, short fins, and generally-small sizes. Sexually mature bluehead suckers usually attain standard lengths of 90 to 200 mm (3.5 to 8 inches).

**HABITAT:** While this species occupies a variety of habitats from headwater streams to large rivers, it is almost always found in moderate to fast flowing water above a rubble-rock substrate. Young fish prefer quiet, shallow areas near shoreline. Spawning occurs in spring and summer when water temperatures are above 16°C. As with certain other suckers (e.g., the Sonora sucker, *C. insignis*), gravid females are probably attended by more than one male, and deposit their eggs in coarse gravel. The fry probably occupy backwater areas, until they are able to swim strongly enough to remain in place in stronger currents. The Zuni bluehead sucker feeds upon algae and other small organisms which are found on the bottom substrate.

**RANGE: Historic:** The historic range of the Zuni bluehead sucker was the Little Colorado River and tributaries, particularly the Zuni River system, in east-central Arizona and west-central New Mexico.

**Current:** Zuni bluehead suckers are limited to headwaters of the Zuni drainage in New Mexico and possibly one creek in Apache County, Arizona. Distribution in streams of occurrence is disjunct. Once common in the Little Colorado and Zuni River drainages, it is now thought to be reduced to about 10 percent of historical range.

**REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY:** Dramatic declines in distribution and abundance in past 20 years, mainly attributable to poor watershed management and perhaps establishment of several non-native predators. The primary threats to this subspecies are road construction, logging, over-grazing, reservoir construction, irrigation withdrawals, and stocking of exotic fishes.

**NOTES:**

In Arizona, Smith (1966) reported the subspecies in four small streams. By the late 1970s-early 1980s, the range in Arizona was apparently reduced to Kin Li Chee Creek (Apache County) on the Navajo Nation. Surveys in April 2000, confirmed that bluehead suckers were still found there. Genetic analysis is ongoing to determine if this is the Zuni bluehead subspecies. Historically, it is believed to be the same species, but morphological and preliminary genetic analysis indicates that is not a member of the Zuni bluehead sucker subspecies.

Listed as a Species of Special Concern by the State of Arizona.

Species also known as Zuni mountain sucker.